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ABSTRACT

Elementary schools can play an important role in early identification of and intervention for children with problem behavior by creating the infrastructure to provide preventive, proactive supports for all students. This monograph provides an overview of key features of effective school-wide systems of positive behavior support (PBS) at the elementary school level. It begins by discussing research findings on effective school-wide discipline practices based on PBS. Key features of PBS are described, including the emphasis on prevention and the use of a continuum of supports that focus on increasing appropriate behavior. Policies and procedures that enhance organizational capacity for successful implementation are summarized and include: (1) provide proactive discipline handbooks to educators that detail the behavioral expectations; (2) adopt research-validated practices; (3) build durable systems that include data-based decision making and screening for early intervention, team-based problem solving, and systematic communication; and (4) use systems that enhance behavioral capacity by establishing student support teams and providing staff development. The role of the administrators in the development of a school-wide system of PBS is explained, along with the strategies for establishing a district-wide system of PBS. (Contains 50 references.) (CR)

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About the Council of Administrators of Special Education

CASE is an international and professional organization committed to facilitating the education and general welfare of students with disabilities. CASE promotes professional leadership and provides special education administrators with opportunities for personal and professional development.



Council for
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About the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

CCBD is an international and professional organization committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders. CCBD, whose members include educators, parents, mental health personnel, and a variety of other professionals, actively pursues quality educational services and program alternatives for persons with behavioral disorders, advocates for the needs of such children and youth, emphasizes research and professional growth as vehicles for better understanding behavioral disorders, and provides professional support for persons who are involved with and serve children and youth with behavioral disorders.

In advocating for the professionals in the field of behavioral disorders, CCBD (a division of the Council for Exceptional Children) endorses the Standards for Professional Practice and Code of Ethics adopted by the Delegate Assembly of the Council for Exceptional Children in 1983.

About This Monograph

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Foreword

Nationwide, school personnel are working to ensure every student a safe, drug-free, quality education. There is no doubt about either the importance or complexity of that task. With mounting pressure to ensure student safety, some school divisions have adopted a so-called zero-tolerance policy of student discipline. No one would quarrel with the original intent of zero tolerance, namely, to protect students from dangerous weapons in schools. However, some authorities do question the logic behind applying the same philosophy to less serious offenses, such as when a student fails to participate in class discussion. Others argue that there are discrepancies in the way current disciplinary policies are being applied. Evidence exists that students from culturally diverse backgrounds often are disproportionately subjected to more severe treatment. A similar concern has been voiced on behalf of students with disabilities. Increasingly, administrators, teachers, and parents are calling for a reasonable middle ground in addressing the issue of student discipline.

At the same time, schools are finding that some established instructional practices are at odds with the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Although we are witnessing an increase in the use of curricular materials and instructional procedures that reflect greater cultural sensitivity, there is more to be done in this area. With these issues in mind, it is encouraging to find a growing acceptance that a reciprocal relationship exists between learning and behavior problems and that it is shortsighted to address one and ignore the other. Accordingly, more and more administrators, faculty, and staff are redefining the culture of their schools and creating a climate in which school-wide and

classroom-level positive academic and behavior supports are in place for all students.

Further impetus for changing current practices stems from the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which contains provisions that address both the academic and nonacademic performance of students with disabilities. For example, IDEA stipulates that education personnel must not only acknowledge the connection between learning and behavior problems, but also, under certain conditions, take specific steps to address the problem(s). If a student's classroom behavior impedes his or her academic progress or that of classmates, it may signal a need to change one or more aspects of the curriculum, management, or instruction. In limited instances, schools must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and then develop a positive behavioral intervention plan and supports. In that way, more serious learning or behavior problems (usually both) can be addressed.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) have long shared a common concern about students with and without disabilities. In light of the challenges faced in schools, the leaders of these two divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) decided to cosponsor two institutes on best practices for working with students with learning and behavior problems. We drew upon the expertise of our members to produce a mini-library series that corresponds with the content of these institutes. We are grateful to those who served as both presenters and authors. We also acknowledge those who served as reviewers of these volumes: Charlene Greene (CASE), Bev Johns (CCBD), Bev McCoud (CASE), Russ Skiba (CCBD), Cheryl Zinszer (CASE), John Faust (CASE), and Jim McCormick (CASE). Together, they have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the challenges of 21st century schools.

Lyndal M. Bullock, Jim Chapple, and Robert A. Gable
Series Editors

Introduction

1

Providing a safe and successful learning environment has become a national priority as disruptive, aggressive, and violent behavior in schools has risen to a level of national concern. On a daily basis, administrators and teachers are confronted with students who act out in disrespectful and defiant ways, disregard rules, vandalize property, and harass their classmates. In one recent study, general education teachers reported that, on average, one in five of their students exhibited disruptive or off-task behaviors and one in twenty exhibited aggressive behaviors to the point where intervention was necessary (Myers & Holland, 2000). The increase in incidence of these behaviors poses a real threat to the education process for all students (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Teachers and administrators indicate that addressing school discipline issues is one of the greatest demands on their time (Hofmeister & Lubke, 1990). Problem behavior in the schools interferes with teachers' ability to educate (Todd, Horner, & Sugai, 1999) and is the single most common reason for the removal of students from classroom and school settings (Walker et al., 1995). Traditional responses to problem behavior in schools have typically included so-called get-tough policies based on containment, punishment, and exclusion of students, even though such strategies have been shown to be ineffective for improving school behavior (Sugai & Horner, 1999). Paradoxically, the coercive and punitive environments that result from this approach may serve as setting events that evoke aggression, attendance problems, disruptions, and other antisocial behaviors (Mayer, 1995). Such methods do not lead to the establishment of desired behavior or

improved learning. Research indicates that a more promising solution is the use of proactive school-wide behavior management strategies to address the contextual factors within schools that lead to problem behavior (Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai, 1993; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Mayer, 1995; Sugai et al., 1999).

Just as administrators and teachers are frustrated with issues of externalizing or acting-out behavior, they are equally as taxed by efforts to effectively engage and promote prosocial behavior in children with internalizing behavior problems, such as depression and withdrawal. Currently, only 1% of the school-aged population are identified as having emotional or behavioral disorders (E/BD) and receive services under the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, most experts agree that 7% to 10% of the student population should qualify for and receive special education services (Kauffman, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). As many as 6% of students should be receiving specialized services to address problem behavior but are not.

The magnitude of concern regarding discipline and the mental health needs of children and youths has prompted the U.S. Surgeon General to call for a national agenda that fosters social and emotional health in children as a national priority (U. S. Public Health Service, 2000). Accumulated evidence points to the need for systemic prevention and intervention to successfully meet the wide range of behavioral challenges that students with and without disabilities present in schools (Colvin et al., 1993; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai, Kame'enui, Horner, & Simmons, 2000; Taylor-Green et al., 1997). Accordingly, the Surgeon General's National Action Agenda (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000) calls for the promotion of cost-effective, proactive systems of behavior support at the school level. These systems of behavior support should emphasize universal, primary prevention methods while also providing a continuum of supports that meet the needs of individual students who display chronic problem behavior. A school-wide systems approach to positive behavior support (PBS) is one way to effectively (a) reduce chronic challenging behavior,

(b) promote cultures of social competence that foster prosocial behavior and academic achievement, and (c) meet the needs of children with significant behavioral challenges.

Implementation of school-wide systems of discipline based on PBS increases the capacity of schools to comply with the intent of IDEA. This legislation emphasizes full participation of children with disabilities in the general education curriculum, emphasizing that special education is a service, not a place. It provides specific rules designed to promote increased prosocial behavior and avoid the removal of students with disabilities from school. As such, it requires a shift from the traditional response of solving behavior problems through suspension and exclusion to an approach that emphasizes the development of positive behavioral interventions. In addition, IDEA mandates that functional behavioral assessments be conducted for students with disabilities who exhibit behaviors resulting in their removal from the school for more than 10 school days (P.L. 105-17; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997). This mandate redefines the roles and responsibilities of special and general educators in accountability for promoting positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports for students with disabilities (Gable, Hendrickson, & Smith, 1999; Hendrickson, Gable, Conroy, Fox, & Smith, 1999). Similar mandates occur across several Canadian provinces. What we have learned from a decade of research and application is that larger overall school-wide systems are required to increase the likelihood that such plans and strategies are implemented with a high degree of integrity.

The challenge for school administrators is to create safe and effective learning environments for all children. Elementary schools can play an important role in early identification of and intervention for children with problem behavior by creating the infrastructure to provide preventive, proactive supports for all students. This monograph provides an overview of key features of effective school-wide systems of PBS at the elementary school level. It is organized around the following five topics:

1. What we have learned, through research and application, about effective school-wide discipline practices based on PBS.

-
2. Key features of PBS and the continuum of supports that focus on increasing appropriate behavior.
 3. Policies and procedures that enhance organizational capacity for successful implementation.
 4. The role of the administrators in the development of a school-wide system of PBS.
 5. Establishing a district-wide system of PBS.

2

Positive Behavior Support: What We Have Learned

Positive behavior support is a general term that refers to the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems to achieve socially important behavior change (Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000). The goal in implementing school-wide systems of PBS is to enhance the capacity of schools to educate all students, including those with challenging behavior, through the implementation of a continuum of research-based practices. The key to achieving this goal is an organizational infrastructure that supports the adoption and sustained use of research-validated practices with an emphasis on (a) an agenda of primary prevention, (b) a continuum that provides increased levels of intervention for intense levels of problem behavior, (c) the use of data to guide decision making and action planning, (d) the establishment of local behavioral competence, and (e) proactive programming for students and staff in all settings.

Proactive school-wide systems of PBS serve to define, teach, and reinforce expected behavior, with the goal of educating all students, but especially those with challenging behavior. The Office of Special Education Programs Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Sugai & Horner, 2001) has reported that over 500 schools in the United States actively implement school-wide PBS. Findings in these schools indicate improvements in behavior, academic gains, increases in instructional time, and a 40% to 60% reduction in office referrals. Current recommendations to build system-wide PBS plans that

follow a continuum of service are firmly grounded and supported by empirical evidence supporting individual components, but there has been limited research evaluating the overall impact of the collective recommendations. However, studies are beginning to appear in the literature supporting the implementation of school-wide systems of PBS. For example, over a 1-year period Taylor-Greene and her colleagues (1997) demonstrated a 42% reduction in behavioral offenses resulting in discipline reports by clearly defining school-wide expectations and teaching students how to meet each expectation. More important, Taylor-Greene and her school team continue to report declines in behavioral problems (Kartub, Taylor-Greene, March, & Horner, 2000). Likewise, Nakasato (2000) demonstrated drops in daily office referrals across six elementary schools through the development of universal PBS strategies. Finally, Scott (2001) demonstrated 65% to 75% reductions in out-of-school suspensions and in-school detentions, which allowed students to be more successful in class to the point of increased standardized test scores.

3

Key Features of School-Wide Systems of Positive Behavior Support

The goal of school-wide systems of PBS is to create and maintain a host environment that supports the adoption and sustained use of research-validated practices that define, teach, and support appropriate behavior. PBS is not a curriculum or program; rather, it is an integration of behaviorally based systems to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective interventions. PBS emphasizes the development of a positive school climate, practical policies, well-defined physical spaces, and monitoring systems designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior and to increase and maintain appropriate behavior. As such, PBS becomes an effective model for a comprehensive discipline system that defines structures and routines to improve the academic and social behavioral outcomes of all students, but especially those who are considered at risk for behavior problems.

Themes of School-Wide Systems of Positive Behavior Supports

While a school-wide PBS approach looks different in every school, given the diversity in composition and available resources, certain themes emerge that form the foundation of school-wide PBS. Key themes are presented and defined in the following sections.

An Agenda of Primary Prevention Is Given Priority

Effective discipline policy does much more than stipulate reactive responses and consequences for not following rules. Effective, preventive policy provides for the definition, teaching, monitoring, and acknowledgment of desired social behavior for all students across all settings. Schools that implement school-wide systems of PBS recognize that all children need behavior support. Rather than waiting for children to fail, appropriate social behavior is defined and taught to all students, thereby preventing the development of new cases of problem behavior. Through the adoption of an agenda of primary prevention, schools embrace a unifying philosophy of respect and high expectation for all learners. This philosophy of primary prevention is highly visible throughout the school and becomes the foundation for all practices and activities related to social behavior and discipline.

The Behavior of Educators Is Emphasized

All staff are active participants in the implementation of PBS, using a proactive, instructional approach to teach and encourage prosocial behaviors in the classroom and across other settings. Contact between teachers and students takes on a more positive and preventive tone, with higher rates of positive interactions than corrective or punishing interactions.

Structures Exist to Support a Multilevel Continuum of Supports

A school-wide leadership team guides the systemic adoption and sustained use of interventions across the PBS continuum of universal prevention and/or early intervention, small-group or targeted systems of support, and individual student interventions. Personnel with behavioral competence should be readily available to teachers to assist with the development of interventions at each level.

Problem Solving Is Team Based

A leadership team made up of administrators, teachers, support personnel, and parents is responsible for decisions regarding the

design, development, and implementation of school-wide discipline systems, as well as the structure and allocation of systems for individual student support. This leadership team also works to ensure that all faculty members are familiar with procedures and practices.

Data Are Used to Determine Action Plans, Decision Making, and Problem Solving

School data such as discipline reports, suspensions, and referrals to special education are reviewed regularly to make informed and accurate decisions regarding patterns of behavior, what is working, what needs to be changed, what needs to be eliminated, and what needs to be addressed.

Positive Behavior Support Continuum

Problem behavior occurs on a continuum from occasional mild misbehavior to behavior that is chronic, severe, and disruptive to the learning environment. PBS emphasizes a parallel continuum of support in which the intensity of practices and interventions increases to match the intensity and complexities of the presenting problem behaviors. For the majority of students, universal prevention and/or early intervention supports work sufficiently to promote and sustain appropriate behavior while discouraging problem behavior. For a small percentage of students, universal strategies will not be sufficient to meet their needs. These students will need more directed and structured small-group or targeted interventions. Finally, comprehensive individual student supports will be necessary for a very small group of students who require intensive, highly individualized systems of support. The following sections outline important features at each of the three levels of comprehensive school-wide systems of PBS (see Figure 1).

Universal Systems of Support

Universal school-wide systems emphasize primary prevention and are usually sufficient to ensure success for the majority of the school population. With an emphasis on creating a safe and predictable environment, a common set of expectations, or school

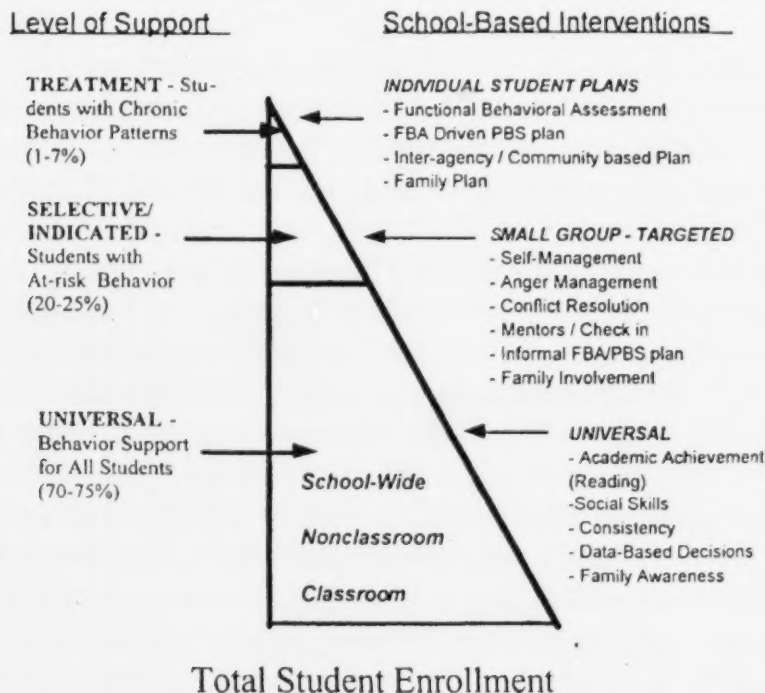


FIGURE 1. Continuum of Positive Behavior Support

rules, teaching strategies, and consistent supports such as adult monitoring are developed (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Universal strategies are applied across three interrelated systems: school-wide, nonclassroom, and classroom.

School-Wide Systems

Commitment, assessment, and planning are the first steps toward the development of school-wide universal systems. Assessment focuses on staff perception of discipline procedures and systems currently in place and prioritizes areas of concern to be addressed. Comprehensive assessment not only gives a clear indication of what is in place and what needs to be done, it also helps to establish the need and commitment of the staff to improve the school climate.

A leadership team is established to guide all processes of PBS. The team should be a composite of teaching, administrative, and

support staff, as well as parents. Although the team takes primary responsibility for the development, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance of the plan, it is important to have commitment to implementation and involvement from all staff.

Components of a proactive system of school-wide PBS include (a) a statement of purpose, (b) a clear definition of expected behaviors, (c) procedures for teaching expected behaviors, (d) procedures for encouraging expected behaviors, (e) procedures for discouraging problem behaviors and (f) procedures for record keeping and decision making (Sugai et al., 2000).

Statement of purpose. A statement of purpose is used to capture the specific objectives of the discipline plan. Because preventive, proactive systems focus on the development and support of prosocial behavior, school-wide discipline systems are considered an instrument for success for teachers and students. As such, the statement of purpose should reflect an agreed-upon approach to discipline that is stated positively, focuses on all members of the school community in all settings, and emphasizes instructional and behavioral outcomes.

Expected behaviors. A clear understanding of expected student behavior is a key feature of school-wide PBS systems. The expectations, or school rules, should be few in number (three to five), positively stated, and structured using familiar language. In addition, for each expectation or rule, specific appropriate example behaviors should be defined for purposes of instruction. To achieve this, schools typically list current problem behaviors and then identify appropriate replacement behaviors for each problem behavior. In other words, they identify what they want the students to do instead. For example, one school identified "be respectful, be responsible, be safe, and be kind" as the school-wide expectations. Specific behavioral examples for "be respectful" included "keep hands and feet to self," "listen when others are talking," and "share with others." Generating universal expectations contributes to consistent communication regarding expected behaviors for all students and staff, and they soon become part of the common language of the school.

Procedures for teaching expected behaviors. All students should be taught the school-wide expectations explicitly. For example, the general expectation "be respectful" would be demonstrated in the cafeteria as "putting your trash in the container before leaving the cafeteria." Exemplars should be relevant to the students, reflecting behaviors that they will use in a variety of the situations and settings they encounter. Social skill lessons should be constructed around the critical features of "tell, show, and practice." "Tell" includes presenting and reviewing the expectation and discussing the reason for the expectation. "Show" includes presenting both positive and negative examples to illustrate each school expectation. "Practice" includes student role plays and multiple opportunities for practice and feedback across the school day. Providing scripted lessons to the teaching staff that are based on direct instruction and include multiple examples within and across multiple settings (developed by the leadership team) enhances consistency and participation. When a school generates its own lesson plans, the exemplars are relevant to the unique context and culture of that school community.

Procedures for encouraging expected behaviors. Procedures should be established that acknowledge appropriate behavior on a regular basis. This serves two purposes: to increase the ratio of positive interactions between teachers and students and to encourage students to self-manage their behavior through the use of the prosocial skills that have been taught. Schools have used a variety of strategies to achieve these goals, ranging from formal token systems to positive social acknowledgment of the occurrence of appropriate behavior. For example, within an elementary school in the St. Louis area, teachers were given a ring of coupons that could be attached to their belt or a clipboard. When a teacher observed a student displaying appropriate behavior, the student was given a coupon along with a comment regarding the behavior. The teacher would relate the observed behavior to the corresponding school-wide expectation. Students turned in their coupons, which were then posted on a poster of a large bone, building on the theme of the school mascot, "The Bulldogs." When a predetermined number of coupons had accumulated (enough to cover the large bone),

the entire school earned an opportunity to play games. Some schools have made provisions to exchange coupons for specific rewards, while others have collected them for entry in drawings. The critical element, however, is not the token; rather, it is the increase in positive interaction between students and teachers that the exchange creates. Teachers and staff are encouraged to maintain a ratio of at least four positive exchanges for each corrective statement directed at students.

Procedures for discouraging problem behaviors. Even with a preventive, instructional approach to behavior, there will still be problems. Most schools have discipline codes of conduct that are aligned with district policy. These policies generally prescribe administrative responses to major rule violations and should be reviewed regarding the appropriateness and consistent use of procedures. Consistency can be increased by (a) providing clear definitions of problem behaviors; (b) categorizing behaviors into two or three categories based on frequency, intensity, and severity (e.g. minor, major, illegal); (c) clearly differentiating between which behaviors should be managed by teachers and supervisory staff and which behaviors warrant an office referral for administrative involvement; (d) providing a continuum of consequence procedures in response to rule violations; and (e) designing and using a functional office referral form that facilitates record keeping and accountability. When students violate rules or behavioral expectations, staff should use a continuum of consequence procedures. Criteria for repeat offenders (e.g., those having three office referrals for the same behavioral offense) should be set to determine when a problem-solving team (e.g., student support team, teacher assistance team, care team) should become involved with a particular student. It is important to remember that consequences alone are ineffective and insufficient to bring about long-term behavior change (Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993).

Procedures for data collection, record keeping, and decision making. A critical feature of school-wide systems of PBS is the use of data to obtain an indication of current conditions and guide decisions regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of procedures.

The leadership team must analyze data over a period of time to discern patterns of problem behavior, determine what is and is not working, and identify areas of concern in order to modify the school-wide system. For this to be done efficiently, the data must be accurate and readily available. While most schools already have some form of data-collection system in place (e.g., absences, tardies, office referrals, suspensions), the data frequently are not summarized or presented in a way that facilitates evaluation and decision making. The challenge for the leadership team, with administrative collaboration, is to design a system of data collection and reporting that will summarize the data in a useable format that contributes to effective, informed decision making. The summary should include separate graphic displays of key indicators such as (a) number of office referrals per day for a given month, (b) cumulative number of office referrals per behavior (i.e., rule violations), (c) cumulative number of office referrals by location (e.g. cafeteria, playground, classroom), (d) cumulative number of office referrals by consequence, and (e) cumulative number of office referrals by individual students.

Simple but specific data decision rules are created to guide the decision-making process and to increase capacity and consistency in follow-up. For example, the leadership team may create criteria concerning when to fade the reinforcement system (e.g., when a 40% drop in office referrals is maintained for 3 weeks, the system will be faded; when there is a 20% increase in office referrals, the social skill lessons will be retaught across all settings). A set of decision rules is also established for evaluating data to determine when an individualized program is needed for students who are not responsive to the school-wide management system.

Nonclassroom Systems

School-wide systems are extended to nonclassroom settings through the direct teaching and practice of behaviors that are unique to each setting. For example, it is appropriate to run on the playground, but not in the school building. Nonclassroom settings typically involve greater numbers of students, less structure, less control over student activity, and low levels of adult monitor-

ing and supervision. Therefore, in addition to teaching specific nonclassroom setting behaviors, teams should also focus on the physical characteristics that may contribute to problem behavior and setting routines that are designed to increase appropriate behavior.

Physical characteristics. Common areas should be evaluated to determine whether there are possible modifications to the physical environment that will facilitate safety and supervision. This might include removing unsafe objects, restricting access to selected areas where staff can supervise easily (e.g., eliminating areas that are obstructed from view), altering traffic patterns, or making adjustments in scheduling to reduce the number of students in an area.

Setting routines. A majority of problem behaviors in nonclassroom settings stem from a lack of adequate routines. Thoughtful, carefully constructed routines establish both student and adult expectations and allow activities to take place more efficiently, thereby decreasing the likelihood of inappropriate behaviors. Common areas should be assessed to determine whether (a) routines to facilitate orderly transitions have been established, (b) students have been taught the routines, and (c) staff are aware of and consistently enforce established routines. Areas in which routines should be considered include the cafeteria (e.g., the lunch line, dismissal from tables, traffic flow), playground (e.g., lining up, equipment use, games), bus (e.g., arrival, dismissal, riding), or assembly (e.g., entering, exiting, actively listening). Posting visual displays of routines (e.g. posters, visual cues) supports consistent implementation and compliance with routines

Classroom Systems

The focus of classroom systems of universal support is not to create classrooms that all look alike, but to extend the larger school-wide system with respect to rules and expectations into the classroom. Classroom teachers should use the school-wide set of expectations with specific examples that reflect each individual class. As with school-wide systems, the classroom system empha-

sizes instruction of clear behavioral expectations, rules, and routines to prevent potentially disruptive behaviors. Important aspects of classroom systems include (a) identification and instruction of rules and routines, (b) the use of effective instructional strategies, and (c) an emphasis on positive teacher-student interactions.

Rules, routines, and procedures. Rules and expectations should be established before school starts and then be taught. The same school-wide rules should be used with classroom-specific examples. Routines are a preventive technique to facilitate orderly transitions (e.g., moving to reading group, turning in papers, lining up for lunch), creating a more predictable environment and helping to eliminate confusion and misbehavior. Teachers should use the first few weeks of school to establish classroom expectations, rules, and routines.

Instructional strategies. There is a well-established link between effective instruction and classroom behavior. Generally, instruction that is too difficult or too easy for a student creates a setting that occasions inappropriate behavior (Cooper et al., 1992; Engelmann, Becker, Carnine, & Gersten, 1988; Weeks & Gaylord-Ross, 1981). Instructional strategies—such as direct instruction—that minimize errors during skill acquisition and maximize the opportunity for students to actively participate and experience success have been found to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom (Engelmann, 1999; Engelmann et al., 1988; Kame'enui & Simmons, 1990). School teams should work with curriculum and instructional specialists to ensure that all teachers are using best practices. The optimal goal is to assist teachers to use instructional strategies that allow students to achieve at 80% accuracy or better.

Teacher-Student Interactions. Coercive, discordant interactions are all too common between teachers and students who present chronic problem behavior (Shores et al., 1993; Steinberg & Knitzer, 1992; Sutherland, 2000; Wehby, Symons, & Shores, 1995). Research indicates that, in most classrooms, the rate of reprimands usually

exceeds the rate of positive feedback and praise statements (White, 1975). This is especially true for students with E/BD who do not have the skills to set themselves up to receive social reinforcement. Students with E/BD often enter into coercive cycles with teachers that can escalate into noncompliance, disruption, and aggression. Teachers must be aware of their own behavior patterns and reactions to student behavior. Altering the pattern by increasing rates of teacher praise and attention is an effective strategy to increase appropriate behaviors and decrease disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Madsen, Becker, & Thomas, 1968; Shutte & Hopkins, 1970). An effective classroom teacher maintains a ratio of at least four positive praise statements to every one reprimand.

Targeted or Small-Group Systems of Support

Approximately 20% to 25% of students in any school building will require behavioral support beyond the universal level (Sugai & Horner, 1999b). Targeted or small-group interventions serve to meet the needs of students who display problem behaviors that place them at risk for establishing chronic patterns of challenging behavior. Routine analysis of data should be conducted to facilitate early identification of students who are not achieving through the use of universal support strategies. One key indicator of the need for identification and selection for targeted interventions and supports is the frequency of office referrals, particularly for repeat offenses, disruptions, suspensions, absences, and tardiness (Tobin & Sugai, 1999; Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). If several students are exhibiting common problem behavior, targeted/small group interventions may be the most efficient and effective response. Targeted or small-group interventions may focus on (a) self-management, (b) anger management, (c) conflict resolution, (d) mentoring programs, (e) daily check-in and check-out procedures, (f) group-specialized social skills instruction, (g) homework/study groups, (h) informal functional assessments and positive behavior support plans, or (i) increased family involvement.

In developing targeted or small-group interventions it is important to build on the universal system by using existing

school expectations, common language, and feedback systems. This level of PBS can be viewed as meeting the need for behavior accommodations and additional instruction, just as students who struggle academically receive academic accommodations and additional instruction (e.g., reading instruction, speech and language). We describe critical features for targeted or small-group interventions in the following sections.

Continuously available intervention. Continuous availability increases the likelihood that students will have access to needed supports before a problem behavior escalates. Consider a student for whom the teacher assistance team has recommended instruction in anger management. If anger management is taught for only one 4-week cycle each semester, the student may have to wait too long or may not have the opportunity to participate at all. Furthermore, ongoing availability is needed to support generalization and maintenance across settings.

Rapid access to intervention. As with continuous availability, if constraints of the system (e.g., inefficient referral systems, extensive paperwork, long periods of time between student case reviews) impede rapid action, the problem behavior may very well escalate or lead to other negative outcomes. Teachers also need to know that rapid access to assistance is available. When teacher requests receive attention and result in a plan of action in a timely manner, teachers have increased confidence that they will receive assistance, and this increases the likelihood that staff will support the system. Methods of identification and referral can include (a) multiple discipline reports, (b) teacher referral, (c) parent referral, or even (d) self-nomination.

Minimal classroom disruption. Targeted or small-group interventions must be efficient in terms of the time and resources required of the teaching staff. The referral system, as well as the interventions, should be made as simple as possible. There must also be a good contextual fit. In other words, the procedures must match the values, time, resources, and skills available in the building.

Adequate resources. The team charged with reviewing student cases and developing targeted or small-group interventions must be competent in the development of instruction-based behavior support plans. Furthermore, the team should be committed to meet on a regular basis to review referrals and relevant data. This team also takes responsibility for monitoring the progress of students receiving supports. To prevent the PBS leadership team from becoming overburdened, many schools have created a second team (e.g., care team, teacher assessment team) to assume the intervention development and monitoring duties.

Continuous monitoring for decision making. Data should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the systems of support in general and to monitor the progress of individual students. As with all levels of support, it is important to look not only for decreases in problem behaviors, but also for increases in prosocial behaviors. Plans should be modified as needed, based on the outcome results.

For example, one elementary school staff identified their at-risk students by reviewing discipline referrals. The parents of 16 students who received 8 or more office referrals during the previous school year were contacted to invite the students to participate in a specialized social skills group that provided more extensive instruction and practice in prosocial behavior that mirrored the universal school-wide instruction. Lessons were taught in small groups once a week after school, and generalization strategies were given to all classroom teachers so that they could provide additional practice and acknowledgment of skill mastery. Of the 16 students, 10 experienced at least a 70% drop in office referrals over the course of the subsequent school year.

Individual Student Systems of Support

The application of universal and targeted interventions will greatly reduce, but not eliminate, the number of students who require intense individualized support. Approximately 5% to 7% of students in a school typically will require intensive, individualized interventions (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Taylor-Green et al., 1997). Students with chronic behavior problems require specially

designed and individualized interventions based on functional behavioral assessment to generate an understanding of how the social and instructional context affects a student's behavior (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Hagan, 1998; Taylor-Green et al., 1997). The following outlines critical features of individual systems of PBS.

A Philosophical Framework

Providing comprehensive interventions that are "wrapped" around the student requires a shift in the philosophical framework from traditional punitive practices based on removal (e.g., suspension, expulsion) to a foundation that is based on providing positive academic and behavioral support at levels necessary to maintain the student in the school environment. Such an approach requires that interventions occur in natural school environments and are based on the individualized needs of the student, not made to fit existing services or programs (Conroy, Clark, Gable, & Fox, 1999; Kerr & Nelson, 1998). Comprehensive, person-centered planning and wraparound processes require an interagency team approach that brings together the school, the home, and community agencies.

Technical Expertise

A level of expertise and fluency in both process and content from an applied behavior analysis perspective is critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of systems of individual support. Technical competence in the science of behavioral assessment and intervention design is essential for the development of relevant support plans that can be implemented with integrity.

A Team Approach

Students rarely interact with only one adult in the school environment. Several teachers, specialists, support personnel, and staff typically are directly involved in each student's school day. Each of these individuals brings information to the decision-making process and should be considered part of a team in the develop-

ment of any intervention or support plan. Assembling the critical players to participate in the process helps to promote support plans and interventions that are compatible with existing routines and settings and match the skills and resources of those responsible for implementation (O'Neill, Horner, Albin, Sprague, Storey, & Newton, 1997; Vaughn, Hales, Bush, & Fox, 1998).

Administrative Structure

Although IDEA mandates assessment-based support planning prior to a change of placement when a student receives special education services, with an agenda of prevention such procedures would go into effect before the problem behavior becomes chronic. To accomplish this, the system must include (a) personnel who are trained in the basic principles of behavior, functional assessment, and behavior support planning; (b) a system for early identification and referral; and (c) an organizational structure that allows for flexible teaming and planning. For instance, the process can be initiated through a teacher's request for assistance from the teacher assistance team or through systematic tracking of data to monitor students who receive multiple office referrals or appear to be developing a pattern of problem behavior. The teacher assistance team assembles a group of teachers, administrators, and support staff who have knowledge of the student to coordinate a plan for conducting an assessment and developing a support plan. A factor that is key to the success of this team is the provision of time to meet on a regular basis to evaluate progress and make necessary modifications in the support plan.

Functional Behavioral Assessment

The team works with the teacher to identify the interactions between the student's behavior and the environment that occasion and maintain problem behavior. Although functional behavioral assessment can be done in many ways, depending on the intensity and complexity of the problem behavior, key features of the process include (a) an operational definition of the problem behavior, (b) application of direct and indirect measures of assessment, (c) analysis of assessment data, (d) development and

validation of a hypothesis regarding the function of the behavior, (e) the design of functionally based interventions, (f) implementation of the support plan, (g) evaluation of outcomes, and (h) systematic decision-making procedures to adjust the program (O'Neill et al., 1997).

Behavior Support Plan

The behavior support plan is the systematic implementation of procedures designed to prevent, reduce, and replace problem behaviors and to develop, maintain, and strengthen socially desirable and appropriate behaviors. Rooted in a behavior analytic perspective, the focus of positive behavior support planning is on changes in the teacher's behavior, the student's behavior, and the environment. Emphasis is on student and teacher behaviors that are accessible, observable, and changeable with an instructional approach. For support plans to be implemented with a high degree of integrity, it is important that the plans (a) fit the natural routines of the setting, (b) are consistent with the values of the people in the setting, (c) are efficient in terms of time and resources, (d) are matched to the skills of the people who will carry out the procedures, and (e) produce reinforcing short-term results (O'Neill et al., 1997).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The leadership team should meet on a regularly scheduled basis to monitor all student plans. Data-collection procedures that are direct and formative are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Based on operationally defined behaviors, such data analysis can minimize bias and inaccurate perceptions and focus attention on the specific problem and appropriate behaviors and the settings in which they occur, leading to efficient and timely decisions regarding the intervention. Use of a data-based approach also facilitates clear communication between the teacher, the support team, parents, and other involved agencies regarding outcomes and intervention effectiveness.

Summary

Addressing behavioral challenges in schools through the development of a continuum of research-based strategies, with the central focus on increasing appropriate behavior instead of simply reducing problem behavior, has emerged as a promising way to address problem behavior in schools (Sugai et al., 2000). School-wide systems of PBS provide the processes, structures, and routines to prevent problem behaviors, intervene early when problem behaviors are first noted, and provide comprehensive individual behavior support plans. Behavioral instruction is provided through a continuum of three levels of support—universal, targeted/small-group, and individual—in which the intensity of the interventions increases to match the intensity of the problem behaviors. All three levels are built on a central theme of teaching appropriate behavior, building multiple opportunities to practice appropriate behavior, and altering environments to promote success.

Universal strategies focus on all students and staff across all settings and establish a common set of positively stated expectations, as well as procedures to teach students how to meet the expectations, recognize and celebrate student social behavioral progress, and ensure consistency among all adults within the school. Targeted/small-group strategies provide additional practice and support for students who continue to engage in problem behavior even though universal strategies are in place. The other end of the continuum focuses on individual students through systems of integrated, team-based planning and problem solving. To build capacity, schools must do the following:

- Form teams of educators who design and oversee school-wide systems of PBS.
- Use data such as discipline reports, attendance, and referral to specialized services to guide and inform decisions.
- Train and support all adults within the school building so that they achieve high levels of fluency in key strategies.
- Build expertise across faculty to deal with challenges along the continuum.

-
- Involve families and community agencies.
 - Develop strategies to maintain systems over time.

To create such systems, we must rethink both school discipline and instructional strategies.

4

Policies and Procedures

Schools represent an intricate mix of professionals, policies, programs, and practices that interact in complex ways (Sugai et al., 2000). However, educators have a history of responding to complex issues surrounding improved outcomes in social behavior with simplistic, generalized solutions that frequently fail. The failure may have less to do with the adequacy of a particular practice when applied in a simple context than the failure to consider the comprehensive host environment in which it is applied (Sugai & Horner, 1999a; Sugai & Horner, 1994). Increasing the systemic capacity of a host environment to develop, incorporate, and extend effective programs and practices of positive behavior support in a sustainable manner requires the adoption and establishment of certain key policies and procedures.

Proactive Discipline Handbooks

Another step in implementation of PBS is examining discipline handbooks to ensure that policy reflects a philosophy of primary prevention. Most discipline manuals focus on lists of unacceptable behaviors and their consequences. An effective policy should be much more comprehensive, with a stronger focus on prevention than on consequences. The policy handbook should detail the behavioral expectations and express a clear relationship between those expectations and the existence of a safe, predictable, and productive learning and teaching environment. Expectations should be stated in positive, observable terms and in a language that is easy for parents to explain to their children. The policy should describe the procedures used to provide corrective feedback when

behavioral errors occur, in addition to the typical consequences for rule violation. Finally, policy manuals should clearly identify those behaviors considered to be crisis and life-threatening situations (e.g. assault, possession of weapons) and how staff should respond in those situations. The policy should also clarify when and how legal authorities will be involved.

Adopt Research-Validated Practices

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act calls for the provision of more inclusive services for children with emotional or behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, and attention difficulties. At a time when schools are struggling to maintain orderly, safe, and productive learning environments, teachers and administrators report that these students require disproportionate amounts of time, resources, and energy. Given the challenge these students present to educators and the complexity of the issues involved in serving them, administrators and other school professionals may be susceptible to interventions and programs with strong but unproven claims of effectiveness (Carnine, 1995; Kauffman, 1996). Programming that is based on little more than an assertion that something "works" is an impediment to improved outcomes for students. Valuable time and resources are lost when programs are not based on sound practices that have been substantiated by research as effective for ameliorating the behavioral and academic concerns of students who are at risk.

Adoption of any practice should be based on evidence, not solely on theory. Research has produced an array of strategies that have led to marked improvement in the overall quality of supports available to children for improved social behavior. There is emerging evidence that one effective strategy for addressing violent and aggressive behavior includes academic and curricular restructuring, social skills instruction, and behavioral interventions (Gottfredson et al., 1993; Lipsey, 1992; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). An important question to ask is whether or not there is evidence that a program, strategy, or process under consideration has

resulted in improved outcomes across a number of students and teachers in similar school communities.

Build Durable Systems

Several key elements of PBS contribute to the development of durable, organizationally efficient structures that increase systemic capacity and guide policy and procedures.

Data-Based Decision Making and Screening for Early Intervention

Data should be used to provide continuous feedback to (a) identify problems and determine a plan of action, (b) select interventions, (c) evaluate whether programs and interventions are effective in meeting objectives and achieving adequate gains, and (d) guide program modifications. To provide valid, reliable information on student behavior patterns and needs, as well as teacher behavior, data collection and analysis should focus on the number and types of behavior referrals, individual students who receive multiple referrals, and the locations where problem behaviors occur (Colvin et al., 1993; Tobin et al., 1996). This continuous feedback loop can also provide teachers with information regarding the effects of the new practices they are implementing. Data collection, analysis, and reporting must be efficient in terms of the amount of time and resources required of staff. Factors to consider when designing data systems include (a) who will collect the data, (b) how it will be collected, (c) how it will be summarized and displayed, (d) how the information will be analyzed, and (e) how the information will be disseminated. The data should be reported and reviewed frequently in natural cycles (e.g., monthly staff meetings, grading periods) to facilitate timely and formative decision making.

Data decision rules should be created to facilitate early identification of and intervention with students who are at risk of developing chronic problem behaviors. For example, case review is automatically initiated for a student who receives three office referrals in 1 month. Targeted or individual student interventions

are implemented in a proactive way, preventing the development of chronic patterns of problem behaviors.

Team-Based Problem Solving

Structures that function through interpersonal relationships, in which people routinely interact around common problems and focus on the connection between their efforts and student outcomes, are more likely to promote good practice (Elmore, 1996). This construct is supported through a team-based problem-solving approach in PBS. A team approach increases the level of expertise and helps to build a foundation for support and dissemination of the system. A PBS leadership team is established to assess the current school climate and existing procedures, set short- and long-term goals, and take on the responsibility of making decisions regarding the development, implementation, modification, evaluation, and maintenance of the school-wide plan. The team should be comprised of an administrator, teachers representing all grade levels, support staff, parents, and other community representatives when appropriate (e.g., mental health workers, social workers, police officers). The team should possess the competence, or the ability to access technical assistance, to implement a continuum of PBS.

Team members must commit to a significant investment of time and effort in the initial stages of assessment, planning, and implementation. The team should meet on a regular, scheduled basis to review data; develop structures of support on the universal, targeted/small-group, and individual student levels; monitor the effectiveness of procedures; and make modifications. The team should have a significant role and status in the governing structure of the school and the establishment of school improvement priorities and should be linked to all school improvement efforts.

Systematic Communication

Regular communication with the entire staff has emerged as a critical factor in establishing commitment to PBS as well as consistency in implementation. Clear systems of communication that

include all staff must be developed to (a) communicate school-wide expectations, (b) communicate procedures for teaching and encouraging expected behaviors, and (c) provide regular, timely feedback on the effectiveness of the practices implemented. Communication can take place through the use of memos, newsletters, daily announcements, posting of data in the teacher's workroom, and staff development. PBS should be a featured agenda item at every faculty meeting, providing staff with an opportunity to give feedback to the leadership team, receive clarification on systems and procedures as they are implemented, and review data to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Systems That Enhance Behavioral Capacity

Student Support Team

In addition to the PBS leadership team, a second team may be established to address the needs of small groups and individual students who require more intense interventions. The members of this student support team must have a significant level of academic and behavioral competence, including a thorough understanding of effective instruction, the contextual factors that contribute to problem behavior, functional assessment and assessment-based support plan development, data analysis, and plan evaluation. Members of this team must also have the competence to consult with and assist teachers, school support staff, students, and parents to encourage implementation fidelity and monitor effectiveness. While this team focuses more intensely on individual students or groups of students, they work collaboratively with the school-wide PBS leadership team to create systems that are consistent with the school-wide expectations and build on structures already in place.

Staff Development

Making the philosophical shift from a reactive, punitive system to one of providing positive academic and behavioral support to

promote success in the school environment requires strategic staff development focused on increasing the understanding of how the social and instructional context affects a student's behavior (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Hagan, 1998; Taylor-Green et al., 1997). Teachers and support staff must be given the knowledge and skills necessary to support effective implementation. Guskey (1986) reported that there are three stages in the order of change for teachers when adopting any new strategy or initiative. The first stage is the change in the teaching practices that teachers use. This leads to the second stage, a change in student learning and behaviors. When the efficacy of the practices is evidenced by improved student performance, the result is the third stage, changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, if teachers are to make the philosophical shift from punitive, exclusionary practices to a practice of providing supports to maintain students in the school environment, staff development must target skills and evidence-based strategies that effectively address teacher concerns and lead to improved student outcomes.

Topics to consider for the entire staff include classroom behavior management practices, active supervision, effective instruction with active participation, and managing escalating behavior, in addition to generalized training on school-wide systems of PBS. The PBS leadership team and student support team will require more intense training than the entire staff on systems of positive behavior support, data collection, behavior analysis, functional assessment and support planning, and evaluation of plans.

Systemic change is a complex process that requires strategically planned staff development (Guskey, 2000). Available training time and dollars should be channeled toward the improvement goals established by the school-wide plan. One-time workshops or training sessions that do not provide procedures to embed the practices into existing structures, continued follow-up, monitoring, or feedback have little chance of leading to meaningful change. Requests by individuals to attend workshops should be considered in light of whether or not the topics are aligned with the top school-improvement goals.

Summary

As a key to success in using effective practices, building systems that allow for fluent, seamless implementation across the PBS continuum are vital. Schools should simultaneously develop capacity as they develop interventions. Revising current policies, procedures, and accompanying handbooks; adopting and sustaining best practices; and building systems that will maintain over time are just a few of the system features schools should include in their planning.

5

The Role of the School Administrator

As a key figure in organizational support and change, the administrator must provide clarity in direction for a philosophical shift to move beyond punishment as the foundation for discipline systems to a proactive, preventive approach. The administrator must steadfastly advance the belief that supporting and educating students with problem behaviors is possible if effective and efficient school-wide systems are in place. The active leadership and support provided by the administrator are critical factors in achieving success. The following are ways the administrator can directly impact the development of durable systems of PBS.

Set Clear Goals

Establishing clear goals is critical to provide clarity in direction, mobilize faculty and staff, and help to keep everyone's efforts on task (Guskey, 2000). Goals also establish the criteria against which progress is measured.

Establish PBS as a Top School Priority

Improving behavior should be among the top three school improvement goals. As such, it is important not to let other competing initiatives, agendas, and peripheral issues divert crucial time, energy, and resources from meeting the school mission and goals.

Analyze Existing Committees and Initiatives

In too many schools, teachers are members of a multitude of committees that overlap in their focus or fail to produce measurable outcomes. Attending meetings and communicating proceedings adds to the already heavy burden of teachers and prevents them from focusing on key improvement goals. Critically analyze the existing committees to determine whether they can be combined or eliminated. Committees that do not contribute to top school improvement goals should be eliminated.

Provide Adequate Time and Financial Resources

Resources must be invested in the prevention end of the continuum as well as for difficult-to-manage students. The leadership team must commit a significant amount of time to the process and should be released from other responsibilities to the greatest extent possible. An effective administrator creates the space and time for the team to meet and work by relieving them from other duties or by securing substitutes and providing release time. Other expenses also should be considered and budgeted, such as data entry, student and staff incentives, and professional development for PBS leadership and student support team members.

Be an Active Participant in Professional Development Activities

Active involvement and open support for PBS-based professional development can strongly influence the school's culture and acceptance of proactive, instructionally focused systems of support.

Support the PBS Leadership Team

The school administrator must show up, show appreciation, and respect and protect team members' time. The leadership team

should have a prominent role in decision making and plan implementation; as such, their efforts should be publicly acknowledged and supported. While the administrator does not have to take the key leadership role on the team, he or she should be an active participant. Supporting the team in the process means not scheduling other meetings that conflict with the team meeting times and not canceling meetings.

Monitor Implementation and Provide Feedback

The school administrator must also ensure that expectations are being taught, modeled, and reinforced by all staff. It is important to make PBS a regular agenda item at each faculty meeting to provide feedback on implementation and student outcomes.

Summary

While best practices in systems change tell us that teams of professionals working together produce the greatest impact, within school buildings, the administrator will and should always play a lead role. The administrator does not have to be the leader of the school-wide PBS system, but it is essential that the administrator support his or her faculty and staff, allowing them to meet the school mission and goals.

6

Establishing District-Wide Systems of Support

The focus throughout this monograph has been on building systems of PBS within elementary schools. The individual school building should have the latitude to adapt best practices to meet their unique local make-up. Each of the schools we work with implements the same process, following the key features described in this monograph. At the same time, each of these schools has developed a unique system of support, addressing factors such as a very large teaching faculty (e.g., 5–6 teachers per grade level) or a very small teaching faculty (e.g., one teacher per grade level), high poverty, high student turnover, and cultural and language diversity. While each school building should have the flexibility to develop and implement a local system of PBS, schools that have been successful and maintain their efforts have clear support from the larger school district. This is especially salient when schools work toward developing seamless systems for small-group and individual students who present chronic challenges. Following are brief descriptions of common features found in successful district-wide implementation of PBS.

Support Across District Leadership

From the school board to the superintendent to all building administrative staff, addressing problem behavior is a top priority. Moreover, all leadership figures see the importance and value in addressing problem behavior from a proactive instruction-

based perspective and moving from punishment and exclusion responses.

Organized and Cohesive Professional Development

All professional development activities, including academic activities, should be linked to the larger district mission of promoting safe and successful learning environments. Particular attention should be paid to professional development activities related to behavior and management. All activities should (a) be based on empirically validated practices, (b) be linked to the processes in developing a continuum of PBS, (c) provide learning and practice opportunities, and (d) provide follow-up training and direct technical assistance during implementation.

Available Behavioral Expertise

As teams develop and implement their systems of PBS, they will need assistance across the continuum. At the universal level, teams may need assistance with developing data-collection systems, social skills lessons and social skills instructional strategies, instructional routines, and efficient setting routines. Teams will most certainly need assistance in the development of small-group and individualized support plans. At this level, teams will need assistance in development and training to become self-sufficient in functional behavioral assessments, small-group social skills lessons, generalization strategies, comprehensive academic accommodations, individual behavior intervention plans including data collection, and working with community agencies such as mental health or family services. It is estimated that districts should have 10 hours per week available to teams in the initial development and implementation of individual student plans (Sugai & Horner, 1999). Logical existing resources to fill this role include school psychologists, consulting special educators, and school counselors. Simply placing someone in this role will not meet school need; the person should be competent across all the processes and

procedures of PBS and have a plan to receive continuing training and information to update skills.

A District Coordinator

In addition to providing training within specific strategies and technical assistance with the development of plans, districts should have a designated "point person" whose job is largely dedicated to implementing school-wide systems of PBS. The coordination of training and accessing the latest best-practice information, overseeing and training of in-field technical assistance, and ongoing evaluation of the process are some of the responsibilities that should be assigned to this person. An additional duty of the contact person will be linking into networks of support that are ideally offered across the state or province through support from the state department or ministry of education. For example, in Illinois, school districts can access district-wide training on basic principles of PBS. In addition, each district then has a representative receive more in-depth, ongoing training through a statewide and regional series of training sessions and technical assistance opportunities.

Summary

Schools are always encouraged to begin the process, build capacity, and implement universal PBS strategies. For many schools, resources within the building will be sufficient to lead to success. For most schools, however, implementing a complete and comprehensive continuum of PBS will require district-level support. Necessary district resources to ensure success, particularly for the most challenging students, include coordinated professional development and ongoing technical assistance provided by personnel who are fluent in best practices such as functional assessment and coordinating multiagency plans.

Conclusion

7

Schools continue to face many challenges in their mission to educate children and youth. Chief among them is ensuring a safe and orderly environment to allow students to learn. Continuing to implement traditional discipline practices such as punishment, detention, and removal from school only compounds, rather than alleviating, the problem. The ineffectiveness of traditional discipline practices can be linked to many factors, including diverse early learning histories, lack of home and community support, risk factors such as poverty and abuse, and disabilities. Unlike the private business sector, public schools do not have the option of choosing what products they purchase or produce. Public schools must work with the materials they are given—in this case the children residing within the school district—and are expected to produce the same outcome for all children, academic and social competence. Educators have a choice: We can bemoan the challenges put before us and expect the families and children to change or we can change how we organize school learning environments.

One promising direction many schools are taking is building a continuum of positive behavior support to address the largest challenge in schools, problem behavior. Building on research-validated practices in the areas of professional development, school system change, and effective behavior and instructional management, schools are building cultures of competence that allow them to be more successful in meeting their mission. This monograph has highlighted each of the key features research is pointing to as essential to building effective school-wide systems. Outcomes to date are showing that schools can have a positive impact on the vast majority of students across school environ-

ments, reducing reactive discipline processes (e.g., office referrals, in- and out-of-school suspension, truancy).

While universal strategies will not meet the needs of the most challenging students in school, they will allow educators to free resources that in turn can be shaped in a more efficient manner to meet individual student needs. In other words, when teachers spend less time dealing with student problem behaviors on a large scale, when administrators spend less time meeting with students as a result of office referrals, and when discipline aides are no longer needed to staff in-school suspension rooms, considerable time and additional resources can be spent in (a) instructing children and (b) working more directly with the small groups of children who need additional assistance. A related benefit of implementing universal strategies is the development of a consistent, proactive school environment. This will benefit the majority of students and is a necessary feature of effective individual behavior intervention plans in that such changes in the environment give students the opportunity to practice new behavior and to receive positive feedback on their performance.

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